



Support Available for Wisconsin's Specialty Crops

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Contact: Ashley Andre (*Huibregtse*), 608-224-5002
Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020

MADISON – Support is now available to improve production and increase marketing of Wisconsin's valuable specialty crops. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) announced today that applications for Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funds are due by April 15.

Specialty Crop Block Grants are awarded to projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crop industries. Projects are meant to benefit the specialty crop industry as a whole and not directly benefit one individual. Selected projects will be included in Wisconsin's state plan and submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for approval and funding.

Specialty Crops include: fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. A comprehensive list of eligible specialty crops is available at www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp.

Non-profit organizations, producer organizations, government agencies, universities and other agricultural organizations are encouraged to apply. Applications may involve a collaboration or partnership between entities.

In 2012, Wisconsin awarded almost \$794,000 of Specialty Crop Block Grant funding to 18 recipients. Funded projects included testing fungicides for flower crops, determining best management practices for Wisconsin high tunnel tomato production and helping mid-sized farmers in Southern Wisconsin access the intermediate market for local produce.

Priorities for 2013 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funding include:

- Environmental sustainability, pest and disease control, and varietal improvement.
- Assisting in developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Handling Practices," and "Good Manufacturing Practices" and other food safety practices.
- Increasing the demand for and supply of locally produced foods in Wisconsin.
- Industry innovation in production, processing, and packaging.
- Education to increase the consumption of Wisconsin specialty crops.

Grant funds will be awarded for projects up to three years in duration. Typical projects are awarded between \$10,000 and \$100,000. In anticipation of receiving funding, project contracts and work would begin in the fall.

Eligible project expenses include: compensation for personnel services, consultant services for subcontractors, materials and supplies, equipment and other capital expenditures, and miscellaneous costs. The applicant must provide at least 25% of the total proposed budget costs as a matching contribution.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funds will be distributed through a competitive review process. Optional grant writing workshops for potential applicants are planned for March 2013.

The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 ([H.R. 8](#)) authorized the USDA to provide grants to states for the fiscal year 2013.

Application materials are online at http://datcp.wi.gov/Farms/Crops_and_Specialty_Crops. For more information, contact Juli Speck, a DATCP Grants Specialist, at juli.speck@wisconsin.gov or 608-224-5134.